

Considering Disruptive Innovations that Improve Student Engagement



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Improvement in Higher Education

- Reform on higher education agenda for a quarter-century
- Calls to improve undergraduate education more insistent in recent years
- Demands for accountability and evidence of quality have pushed many colleges and universities to launch significant reform initiatives.



Challenges to Improvement in Higher Education

- Implementing large-scale, transformational change in colleges and universities is difficult, due in part to complexity and governance practices (Cuban, 1999; Birnbaum, 2000).
- Overall, research on institutional change suggests that "institutional transformation" is rare and that, if change is possible, it is most likely to be incremental (Kezar, 2001).

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**Change is Hard.
*Yet, Some Institutions
Are Doing It!!!***



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What Can we Learn About Improvement From NSSE?



NSSE measures the extent to which students engage in and are exposed to effective educational practices

- 1,500 institutions have NSSE results
- Data provide institutions with diagnostic information about practices associated with learning

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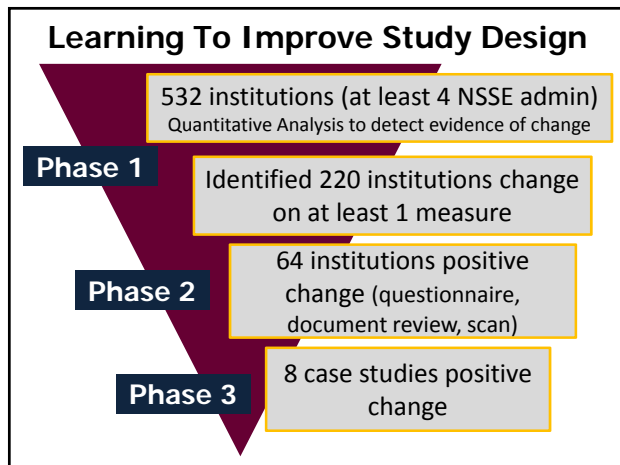
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Research Opportunity supported by Spencer Foundation

- 1,400 baccalaureate-granting institutions participated in NSSE between 2000 & 2009
- Most participated on a cyclical basis
 - ♦ Many with multiple administrations by 2009
- Is change detectable in institution's NSSE results?
 - ♦ How does the institution account for improvement?

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Phase 1: Detecting Change

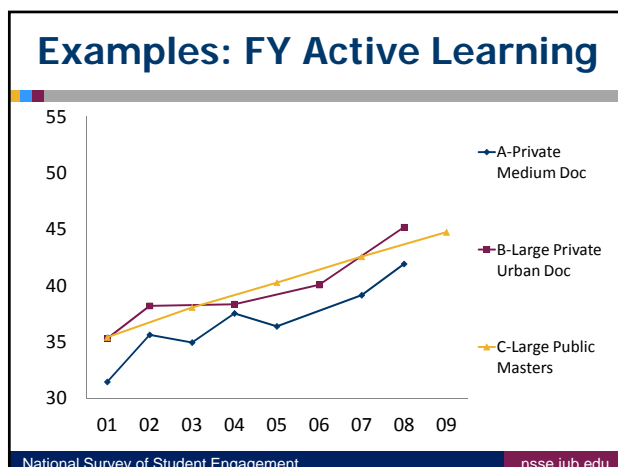
- **Analyzed data from institutions with at least 4 administrations (2004-2009)**
- **Look for trends in NSSE measures**
 - ♦ In either direction
 - ♦ Many found, nearly all were positive
- **Identified more than 200 institutions with improved scores on at least 1 measure**

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Measures Examined

• Level of Academic Challenge	• Active & Collaborative Learning
• Student-Faculty Interaction	• Active Learning
• Course-Related Faculty Interaction	• Collaborative Learning
• Out of Class Faculty Interaction	• Supportive Campus Environment
• Higher Order Thinking	• Support for Success and Enrichment
• Integrative Learning	• Support for Academic Success
• Experiences with Diversity	• High Impact Practices

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Overview of Findings

- **Positive trends outnumbered negative ones, by a margin of nearly 7:1**
- **A trivial fraction saw scores *decline* across multiple administrations**
- **Positive trends detected across the spectrum of institution types**
- **NSSE results suggest institutions ARE improving**

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Broad Patterns

- More trends for first-years than for seniors
- Most common trends were Active & Collaborative Learning and Student-Faculty Interaction
- Many cases with multiple trends



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Propositions about Change

1. The first-year experience more amenable to improvement or more commonly targeted for improvement
2. Institutions investing in particular efforts
 - ♦ Ex: promoting active & collaborative learning and interaction with faculty; endorsing particular broad-based change in a way that spans class levels
3. Capacity for sustained, positive change not limited to small colleges, privates, or residential institutions; Nor is change limited to those with low baseline performance

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Phase 2: Questionnaire



What Accounts for Observed Changes?

Findings

- All but 4 institutions reported implementing change efforts that contributed to improved results
- Primary motivators for change:
 - ♦ Institutional commitment to improving
 - ♦ Data revealed concern
 - ♦ Faculty interest in improving undergraduate ed
- Not much of a motivator: accreditation
- Not motivators: external forces, state mandates, national calls for accountability



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What Seems to Facilitate Change?

- Involvement in External Initiatives – Foundations of Excellence, Teagle Foundation, AAC&U LEAP project...
- Presidential/Provost Leadership
- Meaningful Strategic Planning process
- Improvement aspects of accreditation: SACS QEP; HLC AQIP; WASC
- Real campus problem – persistence, diversity incident

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Phase 3: Site Visits

Preliminary Findings

■ Culture, culture, culture

- ♦ "Positive restlessness" (Kuh et al., 2005)
- ♦ Mission focus
- ♦ Risk-taking ethic
- ♦ Use of data

■ Some role for structure

- ♦ Relationships among institutional research, assessment, center for teaching & learning

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Site Visit Themes: Conditions for Change

1. Grants, Pilots, External Initiatives
2. Stability & Trust in Leadership
3. Physical space/create new learning spaces
4. Comprehensive & Targeted strategic planning
5. Data Informed & Culture of continuous improvement
6. Strong role of faculty – impact of generational change
7. Intentional partnerships of administrative areas – Student and Academic Affairs

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Reflective Discussion at your Table...(5 min)

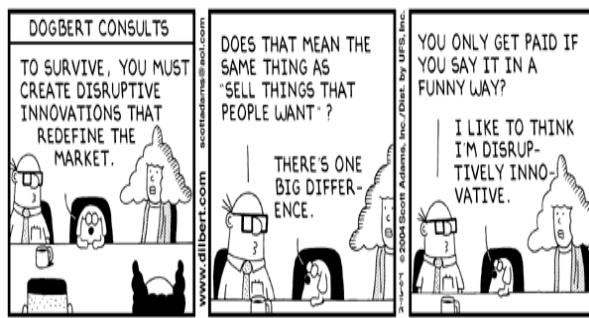
- What are the reasons for pursuing assessment on your campus?
- Where is IR situated? What is the relationship between IR, Assessment, and the improvement of student learning? How is student affairs involved?
- Who are influential players in using data to improve, or in other change projects on your campus?



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Are Practices Associated with Change "Disruptive Innovations"???



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Innovations Vital to Improvement

- Practices at some institutions seem to be "disruptive innovations" in that they apply new values, potentially change the market, or effectively displace how things were being done.
- Not likely to qualify for Clay Christensen's complete definition.

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Possible Disruptive Innovations for Institutional Change

1. Grants, Pilots, Involvement in External Initiatives to create culture of new ideas, collaboration, challenge, accountability
2. Repurposing Institutional Research (IR) to facilitate data informed change
3. Grassroots leadership expands who is involved, strengthens partnerships, encourages risk

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Grants, Pilot Projects, Involvement in External Initiatives

- Grants supported initial work, and then were sustained at Santa Clara
- Multiple Teagle grants at Augustana provided opportunities for widespread faculty involvement
- Foundations of Excellence at Ohio University

The Teagle Foundation



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Repurposing Institutional Research

- Southern CT created Office of Assessment & Planning to bring IR into broader planning efforts – rejected old notion of IR staff as “short order cooks”



- IR staff as collaborators; supporters of institutional change; at the table for educational discussions.



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Grassroots Leadership

- Trust in the talents of VP&SA, Dean of Students, Deans, director-level staff, Center T&L
- Spread involvement and share data



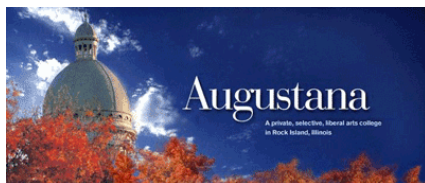
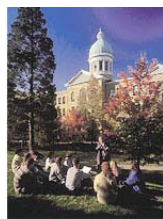
Try something, no penalty for failure

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A Closer Look at Change on One Campus

Mark Salisbury, Augustana College, Rock Island IL



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Augustana College

• Institutional Research and Assessment Office

Dr. Mark Salisbury
Director of Institutional Research and Assessment
Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs

Dr. Kimberly Dyer
Research Analyst (Part-Time)

Augustana College

• Institutional Research and Assessment Vision Statement

- *The Institutional Research and Assessment Office propels the Augustana teacher, student, and scholar community to actively embrace a culture of improvement that is mission-centered and evidence-based.*

Augustana College

• Institutional Research and Assessment Mission Statement

- The Institutional Research and Assessment Office gathers, examines, interprets, and applies evidence to improve student learning and maximize educational effectiveness at Augustana College. We cultivate this process of perpetual improvement in three ways.
 - Collect a wide range of evidence to inform decision-making
 - Consult with faculty, staff, and administrators to facilitate successful engagement in the entire assessment process
 - Collaborate with faculty, staff, and administrators to utilize evidence in designing and implementing pedagogical, programmatic, or policy improvements

Augustana College

• Repurposing Institutional Research

- Apply the concept of backwards design to a position/campus office

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• Repurposing Institutional Research

- Apply the concept of backwards design to a position/campus office
- If the goal is institutional improvement, then IR can be a facilitator of organizational learning

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• Repurposing Institutional Research

- Apply the concept of backwards design to a position/campus office
- If the goal is institutional improvement, then IR can be a facilitator of organizational learning
- From a link in a chain to a web of influence

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• Using Grants and Pilot Projects to Launch Wider Change Initiatives

- Participation in national or multi-institutional projects

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- **Using Grants and Pilot Projects to Launch Wider Change Initiatives**

- Participation in national or multi-institutional projects
- Gather committees and working groups to spread awareness, information, and influence

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- **Using Grants and Pilot Projects to Launch Wider Change Initiatives**

- Participation in national or multi-institutional projects
- Gather committees and working groups to spread awareness, information, and influence
- We are compelled to report to the rest of the campus

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- **Grassroots Leadership**

- Lead from behind . . .

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- **Grassroots Leadership**

- Lead from behind . . .
- Empathy, trust, and transparency

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- **Grassroots Leadership**

- Lead from behind . . .
- Empathy, trust, and transparency
- My role as “talent management”



To Consider:

- **Change is possible.**
 - What is the status of improvement on your campus?
 - To what extent are these “disruptive innovations” present on your campus?
 - What might help facilitate organizational learning or create a culture for improvement?

Thinking about Change: Organizational Learning

- Learning reflects interpretation of experience; encoded into organizational routines and standard operating procedures (Daft & Weick 1984; Fiol & Lyles 1985; Levitt & March 1988)
- Does learning mean improvement? Theorists differ.
 - ♦ We embrace the perspective that learning is improvement-focused (Fiol & Lyles, 1985; Torres & Preskill, 2002)

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For Discussion: What Qualities Facilitate Organizational Learning?

Qualities of the...

- 1) individual(s) in the role of IR, Assessment, Center for T&L etc.
- 2) working relationship between the Dean, Provost and IR and Assessment
- 3) organizational culture and leadership for assessment and improvement

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Understanding Improvement

Organizations that improve... create and nurture agreement on what is worth achieving, and they set in motion the internal processes by which people progressively learn how to do what they need to do in order to achieve what is worthwhile.

(Elmore in Fullan, 2001)

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Considering Disruptive
Innovations that Improve
Student Engagement

Discussion



For more information: see NSSE Web site "Learning to Improve", and Annual Results 2012 (download from Web site).

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